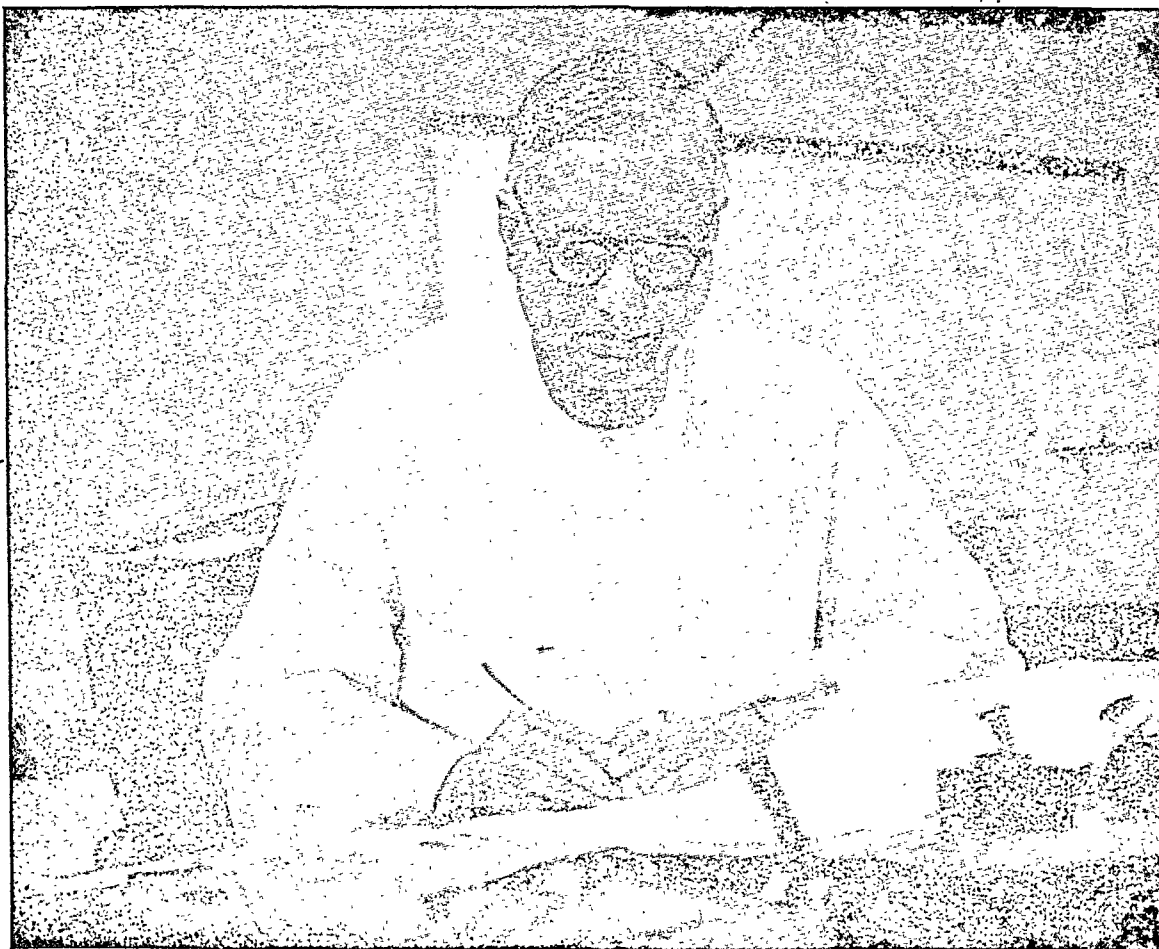


A Bulletin of the
Directorate of Archaeology
West Bengal

No. I



Shri K. N. Das Gupta

When The sailors of The Mediterranean world and the coasts of The Red Sea visited Bengal about two thousand years ago, They noticed a civilisation highly advanced and martial and expressed eagerness to come into contact with the navigators of The Valley of the Ganga who were found ever willing to ~~come~~ exchange commodities with The foreigners.

This brilliance of culture also fascinated in a different way the adventurous pilgrims of China in later centuries who had the privilege to see the ancient mounds of Tamralipta and Karna Suvarna.

The activities of this newly born Archaeological Directorate of The State, in the direction to unravel the mystery of The Past and to shed a new light upon the path of oblivion and obscurity, are indeed commendable and may be looked upon with high hopes for unfolding some of The golden chapters of The Past.

Anandapuri

4.8.61

FOREWORD

During publication of this first Bulletin of the Directorate of Archaeology of West Bengal further explorations and excavations have revealed the existence of several proto-historic habitational sites in the valley of the rivers Ajay and Kunoor, amongst whom the mounds of Pandu Rajar Dhibi often simply known as Rajar Dhibi in Burdwan district, have proved to be almost as mysterious as any *Tell* mound of Western Asia. With the contemplation of future publication of a report about these and other early sites of West Bengal, it has been modestly endeavoured in this Bulletin to attract the attention of lovers of art and archaeology by putting together in concise various reports of archaeological discovery in the State in pages to ensue.

We are fortunate to find our Bulletin being graced by the blessings of our honourable Minister Shri K. N. Das Gupta whose encouragements in the sphere of archaeology are ever so invaluable.

P. C. DAS GUPTA.

Directorate of Archaeology
West Bengal
33 Chittaranjan Avenue
Calcutta-12.

The 27th September, 1962

PREFACE

Since the creation of the Archaeological Directorate of West Bengal, systematic attempts have been made to explore various ancient sites of this State with a steadfast purpose to know of her pre-history and to correlate Bengal's cultural phases of the past. Obviously, we had to cover by our regular tours almost all the districts of this State and had to carry on investigations in forlorn river-valleys and rocky terrains effecting discovery of no less than twenty-four pre-historic Microlithic sites besides recovery of about one hundred and fifty sculptures of stone mostly appertaining to Pala times and other smaller sculptures of terracotta, stucco and Bronze. The terracotta figurines and seals as also pottery often go back to Sunga-Kushan and earlier times. The present collections of the Directorate which comprise of so many objects of art and antiquity also including coins, inscriptions, historic documents, paintings, wood-carvings, textiles and folk-art have indeed become sufficiently rich to start a fine gallery or museum for this State.

It is pleasant to acknowledge that the small successes which we had been fortunate to make in the domain of field-archaeology, were to an extent due to the persistent co-operation and patronage of the District Officers and their staff without whose kind assistance our explorations might have failed totally.

Among the generous donors who made over important archaeological and historic objects to this Directorate names of Shri Aswini Kumar Banerji, formerly Block Development Officer, Binpur II, Midnapur district, and Shri Gouri Sankar Roy of Murshidabad, the descendant of Maharaja Nandakumar are specially to be mentioned. The largest collection handed over as gift came from *Prachya Bharati* of Balurghat in West Dinajpur, and this includes a unique Suryya bearing an inscription on the pedestal referring to the name of Emperor Devapala and has victorious reign. It is also a privilege to acknowledge indebtedness for this publication to the Public Works Department to which we belong and the Home (Publicity) Department.

Apart from the zealous endeavours of our Superintendents, Shri D. K. Chakravarty and Shri S. C. Mukherji, some of the collections were brought to the Headquarters by the members of our staff and private antiquarians.

PARESH CHANDRA DAS GUPTA

DIRECTORATE OF ARCHAEOLOGY,
WRITERS' BUILDINGS,
CALCUTTA :
The 16th August 1961.

Archaeological Discovery in West Bengal

Since the creation of the Archaeological Directorate of West Bengal, continuous efforts have been made not only to make a survey of ancient temples and shrines in the State but also to carry out archaeological explorations at various ancient sites and mounds. Such frequent archaeological explorations carried out by the present writer and the Superintendents, Shri D. K. Chakravarty and Shri S. C. Mukherjee, have effected discovery of numerous relics of ancient times which will no doubt throw new lights in the history of this part of India. In short, this Directorate carried out a thorough survey of the lateritic zone of West Bengal, which effected discovery of twenty-two Microlithic industrial sites occasionally yielding Palaeolithic choppers and points, viz., Organda, Silda, Astajuri, Sahari, Bhagabandh, Kukrakhupi, Gidni and Chilkigarh in Midnapur district, Kalla Lalbazar, Manohar, Bon Asuria, Shaharjora, Kankradara, Bauridanga, Jhargram, Kachinda as also a forlorn spot in the valley of river Jaypanda, a tributary of Silavati in Bankura district apart from Gopalpur, Satkahonia, Bilgava, Sagar Bhanga, Arrah and Khurupir jangal in Burdwan district. These Microliths (figures 1, 2 and 3) mostly consist of blades, burins, awls, points, scrapers, lunates and crescents sometimes revealing beautiful finish as it is specially the case with the tools of Kalla Lalbazar, Manohar and Sagar Bhanga amongst others. While it is not easy to give a precise dating of these prehistoric lithic implements or tools, it is not improbable that the earliest among them go back to the beginning of Holocene at the end of the last Pluviation about 10,000 years ago, the reason of such chronological hypothesis being based upon the manner of red staining as also patination besides occasional embedded condition in the lateritic cores. Whatever may be the dating of these numerous Microliths

belonging to different phases, it is quite obvious to see a deep affinity between these tools on the one hand and those from Chaibasa and Mayurbhanj on the other, apart from similar tools recovered from various other archaeological sites of India and some of those from distant Palestine usually termed as Natufian. While scholars may continue to propound hypotheses, it is quite intriguing to find highly finished Neolithic celts from Bon Asuria (figure 4) Kachinda and Jay Panda valley in Bankura district besides the valuable finds of Neolithic ring-stones from Organda and Kukrakhupi in the basin of Tarafeni and Dulung and from Kankradara and Kachinda in the valley of the river Kansavati. These Neolithic celts may naturally be compared with those once found at Tamluk, the site of ancient Tamralipta as also a similar polished one with a pointed butt recovered from the eroded river-banks of Harinarayanpur, a few miles south from Diamond Harbour. When one is left wondering whether these Microlithic peoples were responsible for the development of later historic civilisation in West Bengal, it may also be noted that some mysterious finds of Black-and-Red Wares of Harappan origin from Rajar Dhipi in Burdwan district along with some Microliths may reveal a forgotten route which went right across the river Damodar and ran through the present Sal forests of Kaksa and Bhedia.

Apart from the evidences of stone-age cultures in Bengal, antiquities have been recovered by the Archaeological Directorate which may recall a forgotten prehistoric tradition in this part of India. Thus, the archaeological findings from Boral, a few miles south from Calcutta, which are mostly datable to early historic times include a flying bird with outspread wings on pedestal besides the antiquities from Harinarayanpur which

have included among others a pre-historic terracotta seal of Egypto-Cretan style (now in Asutosh Museum of Calcutta University) and terracotta bulls with characteristic humps revealing that they are the *Brahmani* bulls whose significance was appreciated in the days of Mohenjodaro. One of such terracotta bulls from Harinarayanpur as preserved in the Archaeological Directorate has legs ending with cylindrical forms as also the head possessing perforation which are all clear indications of a terracotta toy (figure 5). Apart from this, the archaeological site of Chandraketugarh, otherwise known as Berachampa, in the Barasat subdivision of 24-Parganas district has also formerly yielded numerous antiquities including an eye-shaped seal delineating figures in proto-historic style as also the example of a terracotta Serpent Mother recalling similar ones from Sonapur in Bihar and various examples of Black-and-Red pottery whose tradition is evidently coming down from chalcolithic times. While there are archaeological sites in lower Ganges valley which conceal vestiges of a civilisation coming down from pre-Mauryan times, there are evidences which make it manifest that Bengal was highly civilised more than 2000 years ago and the relevant antiquities are coming from ancient sites like Chandraketugarh, Boral, Hariharpur, Atghara and Harinarayanpur in 24-Parganas district, Tamralipta (modern Tamluk) in the Midnapur district, Adi Saptagram in Hooghly district, Pokharna in Bankura district, Rajar Dhipi near Bhedia in Burdwan, and Bangarh (figure 12) in West Dinajpur besides Mahasthanagarh which is now in East Pakistan. The Archaeological Directorate has collected numerous antiquities in forms of terracottas and pottery from Chandraketugarh, the finds which mostly consist of the Northern Black Polished Wares of the pre-Mauryan and Mauryan epochs, terracotta figurines envisaging Kubera, Agni and others as also seals of Sunga and Kushan epochs besides a small vase with chocolate slip and per-

forated ears which apparently recalls similar proto-historic vases from Jiwanri in Dasht valley of Baluchistan (figures 6—11 and 13). The archaeological finds from Boral, Hariharpur, Atghara and Harinarayanpur mainly consist of terracotta figurines and beads of semi-precious stones as also a few pottery fragments inscribed in *Khorosthi* character of circa 2nd. century A.D. The *Khorosthi* inscription which comes from Harinarayanpur contains the name of certain *Mitradharma* who probably dedicated the vase about 2000 years ago. A beautiful terracotta vase with demarcated slips and incised designs and palmettes as also another fluted vase comparable with so-called "pillared-bowls" from Boral seem to be of Hellenistic origin besides terracotta sprinklers from this site which bear Roman characteristic. While the terracottas from Chandraketugarh mostly consist of numerous figurines representing *vaksas* and *yaksinis* and other divinities generally assignable to Sunga-Kushan epochs, there is also a terracotta seal which visualises a *torana* or a gate-way with voluted architraves like the *toranas* as we find at Sanchi and Bharhut, the device being encircled by an inscription (figure 11). A divine peacock may be seen to be perched upon the topmost architrave, the scene stylistically belonging to the Sunga period may be assigned to circa 1st century B.C. and in this connection, it may be noted that seals with similar motif had formerly been recovered from the same site by the Asutosh Museum of Calcutta University. The terracotta male and female figures as also the *mithuna* plaques reveal a sensitive and lyrical approach with a confidence in sculptural reproduction though in miniature and among those terracottas, special mention may be made of a head shown as wearing a *sirastraka* which in its style and feeling (figure 10) recalls the ancient sculptures of Gandhara during the Kushan epoch apart from the latter Bodhisattvas of Devnimori in the valley of the river Sabarmati in Gujarat.

The ancient pottery wares from Hariharpur and Atghara on the other hand will also create an enigma as one of these from the former site seems to be related with Painted Grey Ware which were once used in India in pre-Buddha times, besides the examples from the second site, Atghara, which include a beautiful painted sherd of proto-historic fabric and execution, though the design is simply a circular band.

What appears to be the most interesting are the archaeological finds from Adi Saptagram near Hooghly, which consisting mostly of ancient pottery not only include fragments of Rouletted Wares of Graeco-Roman origin sometimes bearing slips but also fragments of Black Polished Wares besides affiliated examples of corrugated pottery recalling those of Ujjayini and a mutilated terracotta dish with gray core and glaze of silver finish. It is quite well-known that Saptagram is an old port where on the waters of the Sarasvati, at one time a much bigger river, once rode at anchors ships of foreign countries while many scholars have maintained that the city really prospered as a port in the mediaeval times long after the decline of Tamralipta identified with modern Tamluk in Midnapur district of West Bengal. The recent explorations of the Archaeological Directorate resulting in the recovery of such archaeological finds as already mentioned may suggest that Adi Saptagram has a much more ancient past whose palmy days extended down to the Mauryan epoch apart from its importance as a busy port and a kind of Graeco-Roman trading station in the opening centuries of the Christian era, the antiquities which include fragments of Rouletted Wares recalling those others from Chandraketurgarh, Harinarayanpur, Tamralipti, Sisupalgarh, Arikamedu and Salihundam, and thereby an earlier view has found a firmer ground, that the river Sarasvati once bore the sea-borne traffic of the Mediterranean world and the city flourished in the Mauryan times.

The Archaeological Directorate of West Bengal has now an excellent collection of examples of ancient statuary art of Bengal beginning from the Gupta times down to the dusk of Pala convention. The sculptures which will be discussed now are mostly carved of stone besides a single outstanding piece of stucco from Karnasuvarna, which by perhaps envisaging a Bodhisattva has excelled above its counterparts in relief and painting of contemporary India (figure 14). This stucco head is beaming with an ethereal gesture of mercy and emotion and it has nothing to be compared in Indian Art except the painted Padmapani of Ajanta Cave I. The arched eye-brows like slender leaves shading the blue-lotus eyes half-closed in contemplation, and the lower lip swelling in emotion and love for the mortal ones define the culminating idealism of the Gupta idiom rivalling the style of Sarnath, Ahichchhatra and Mirpur Khas (Sind). Here one is left wondering whether the gentle volume and the tranquil expression of the Gupta art originated in Bengal sublimating the massive dimensions of the carvings of Mathura and the crisp sensuality of Amaravati.

What occasioned in the Gupta art of Bengal slowly influenced, as also determined the later sculptural developments of this country, the terracotta traditions of Paharpur aspiring to breathe a new air of freedom by an amalgamation with folk inspiration while the stone carvings of the Pala period developed into a mediaeval school which captured forms in more subtle and lyrical dimensions being essentially romantic in its appeal. The myriads of lithic representations of deities and other accessory figures and decorations found in different parts of Bengal in her both eastern and western regions are enchanting witnesses of an age of great artistic upheaval which drew its inspirations from emotion and love for personal gods, the *Griha-devatas* and *Ishta-devatas*. Here in the question of expression the artists of Pala Bengal were not certainly isolated, as such

tendency can be noticed in some of the immortal sculptures of Padmavati, Taxila and Ushkur sometimes visualising a weeping girl or a *devata* expressing as if an ecstasy of divine love, besides the graceful river goddess of Dah Parvati in Darang district of Assam who not only looks to be replete of feminine beauty but also the very personification of a river's tender enchantment and her constant affection for her valleys. Nevertheless, the art of Pala Bengal is an idyl of the Past whose beauty and grace are so often perceptibly hidden in masses of stone carved into forms as contemplated in *dhyanas* more or less a thousand years ago. The sculptures of both stone and metal ascribable to this epoch express the subject and emotion which rippled in the stream of Indian thought and tradition from centuries before inspiring in special the monuments of Gupta period and in that way they represent an evolution imbued with devotion and love for personal gods who did not still give up their classical garbs. The Pala art no doubt represents the eastern Indian phase of a common artistic movement which took place after the disintegration of the Gupta empire synchronising a new struggle to inherit it giving importance to regional feelings as regards cultural impulse and dynastic suzerainty. While in the classic Gupta idiom of sculpture a subtle freedom from the earlier realistic and sensual approach of the Kushan art resting on Hellenistic and other nomadic ideology was visible though it still adhered to volumes, (figure 15), the Pala statuary and reliefs will make us aware of a change by revealing a delightful procession of divinities more lyrical and warm in an unreal world environed by fairies and chimera all carved with a surpassing delicacy and sensitiveness. In a word if the Pala sculptures departed from the majestic depth and volume of the Gupta convention yet they visualised an emotional refinement in liquid lines and soft modulations all of which expressed an inner tension far above mortal desire and quite fantastic in its appeal. The recent

collections of more than a hundred Pala images by the Archaeological Directorate of West Bengal will illustrate such a romantic transition and will eloquently express the vocabulary of an art in its movement through centuries when new ideas and conquests under the rule of the family of Dharmapala inspired the artists of eastern India. While a unique Chandī of circa 9th century A.D. from Ambikanagar in Bankura district represents the goddess draped in South Indian fashion and standing in a graceful poise with her well-shaped left knee slightly bent forward recalling the Chola style, a majestic torso of Visnu from Jalbandha in Murshidabad district reveals the typical modelling in late Gupta convention which is manifest in the deeply indented folds of cloth, as also in the supple treatment of the smooth plane and voluminous mass all of which are reminiscent of the super-human feelings of the much earlier *yaksa* from Patna. The torso like one seated Kubera from Batesvar near Maynaguri in Jalpaiguri district chronologically remains in the point of transition from the dignified volume of the Gupta art to the graceful elegance of the Pala style whose enchanting delicacy distinguishes so many images from different parts of West Bengal mostly appertaining to about 10th and 11th centuries A.D. Among the latter examples, special mention be made of a unique Vajra Tara with four faces and surrounded by minor goddesses from Birbhum whose eight arms hold among other symbolic attributes a sword raised above in an attractive poise effecting a youthful modulation of the supple upper part while an eccentric emotion, a kind of ecstasy is shown as a denouement of a divine life recalling the immortal scene of Gautama cutting his own hair on the eve of his spiritual sojourn for Bodhi. Apart from Vajra Tara who is the emanation of Dhyani Buddha Aksobhya, there are other images in the Archaeological Directorate which belong to the pantheon of the Northern Buddhism and these include figures of Marichi, Lokeshvara,

Vasudhara, Hayagriva, Heruka and Khadiravani Tara, all of which no doubt once inspired the art and iconography of ancient Nepal, Tibet and China. While the image of Marichi, the Buddhist goddess of Dawn, will depict her in the tense moment of her most beautiful and resplendent arrival by a chariot drawn by seven pigs, the Buddhist counterpart of the Brahmanical concept of Suryya, a seated Lokesvara from Burdwan is visualised as being flanked by his associates, Sudhanakumara and Hayagriva above the usual representation of the *preta* Suchimukha, besides the unique sculpture of Vasudhara from Dinajpur which is a curious example of syncretism where the characteristics or cognisances of Hariti and Laksmi are also blended together she being seated in *lalitasana* by carrying a child and an ear of corn with her *vahana* the owl shown as taking place in a corner beneath (figures 22 and 31). The sculpture of Marichi has three faces, one being that of a pig and it is comparable with an image of the same goddess now in the Dacca Museum, while her form is delineated in an unusual delicacy and sense of movement, her *alidha* pose having her right foot extended effects a modulation warm with inner exultation suggestive of her graceful limbs in spite of her muslin skirt tightened by her symbolic stride and giving way to finest frills in front which look as if splashed in a cascade. Besides, the mutilated sculpture of Hayagriva or Bhairava from West Dinajpur reveals an uncommon sense of modelling, the bearded and expressive face as also the pot belly of the corpulent figure organically belonging to a common mass where lines interlock on a smooth and polished plane.

The numerous stone sculptures of the Pala period belonging to the Brahmanical iconography as preserved in the Archaeological Directorate are no less interesting and they include among others the images of such gods as Visnu, Suryya, Ganesa, Agni, Karttikeya, Manasa, Navagraha, Parvati, Uma-Mahesvara, Sarasvati, Kubera, Chamunda and others besides

some scenes of divine atmosphere in form of tableaux or still-drama as the representations of *Siva-Nilakantha* Visnu revealing himself as Narasimha, manifestation of Suryya wearing long boots and riding on a chariot drawn by seven horses as also Ganesa or *Vighnantaka* dancing in a symbolic glee (figures 15, 17-23, 26-31). What appears to be most interesting is an image of Suryya recovered from the vicinity of Balurghat in West Dinajpur (figure 23), whose decorative convention and massive treatment appertain it to the golden age of Pala imperialism though an inscription at the base below the fiery steeds (figure 24) already makes it clear that the image was carved during the *vijaya-rajya* or victorious reign of emperor Devapala in the middle of 9th century A.D. The figures of Goddesses like Usha and Pratyusha, the divine archers perpetually fighting against the cosmic darkness and symbolising the early dawn like Greek Aurora, as also the softly voluminous form of a deity standing on a floating cloud on the stele are all suggestive of a touch of Sino-Tibetan art where the sculptors of Pala Bengal seem to have contributed no little.

While a large stone Visnu from Manigram is a unique example of Pala statuary art of about 10th century A.D. revealing the majestic form of the god with a halo or *siraschakra* behind being flanked by his wives Laksmi and Sarasvati all suggestive of restrained volume and modelling in the round, the treatment of independent halo echoing the earlier traditions of Gandhara, Mathura and Sarnath, images of dancing Ganesa (*circa* 10th-11th centuries A.D.) from West Dinajpur and Murshidabad reveal an uncommon balance and movement besides an intact sculpture of Suryya of about 10th century A.D. from Sitalkuchi in Cooch Behar which manifests a refined workmanship and schematic composition where the tension of the moving chariot and archers finds equilibrium in the transcendental repose of the Sun holding his usual lotuses.

The Directorate has also a valuable numismatic collection, including silver punch-marked coins of Mauryan and pre-Mauryan times supposed to have come from Lohapur in Birbhum, numerous uninscribed copper cast coins of about two thousand years ago from Chandraketugarh and Harinarayanpur and a hoard of one hundred and thirteen copper coins struck by Kushan emperors beginning from Wema Kadphises down to Huvishka.

While the coins of Kadphises will reveal the robust stature of the king in heavy overcoat busy in the act of making an offering to an altar flanked by a royal mace on the obverse, the reverse will show Siva gracefully standing in *dvibhanga* pose holding his trident and reposedly reclining on his *vahana* the bull with perfect balance and modulations. The coins of Kanishka include among others a series of examples with similar royal figures on the obverse and among other gods like Mihira, Oado (wind god), Siva and Helios, sometimes the deities, being introduced to India from extra-Indian pantheons. The coins of Huvishka, on the other hand, will show other deities on the reverse apart from royal figures on the obverse sometimes riding on elephant with full royal panoply including a spear and an *ankus* (goad), the deities who can be recognised as Mao (Moon-god), Athso (the counter-part of Hellenic Hephaistos, the god of Metals with fillet and tongues), the sun-god Miro (Mihira), the wind-god Oado, and the four armed Siva. The coins of Huvishka will sometimes show the king reclining on couch the pose of relaxation which will give us the glimpse of an ancient Central Asian leader, who would seldom like to take off his military uniform.

The coins which require a detailed and scientific study have been presumed to have been discovered somewhere in Northern India though the exact find-spot is still unknown.

The coins may also be the part of a larger hoard including three coins of *circa* 1st century B.C. with cult-devices of bull and palm-capital (*Taladhvaja*) as also horse of satraps and rulers of Northern India like Hagana, Hagamasa and Aryamitra.

The other coins as collected by the Archaeological Directorate include a small round gold coin from Nunia in Jhargram subdivision of Midnapur district of 6 grs. weight and 0.28" diameter bearing the device of an antelope on the obverse and a legend on the reverse, evidently a *Ganga fanam* of about thousand years ago, besides several silver Muslim coins struck by the independent Sultans of Bengal like Islam Shah and Sikandar Shah as also the Mughal emperors like Jahangir and Shah Alam from various mints including the one at Saptagram. Pleasantly enough, the silver coin of Islam Shah contains in a beautiful calligraphic style also a short *Devanagri* legend which may be read as *Sri Islama Shaha*.

The Archaeological Directorate has also taken up a regular scheme of surveying ancient temples and shrines in West Bengal and this has effected discovery of a number of Gupta and mediaeval temples in different districts like Purulia, Midnapur, Murshidabad and Jalpaiguri. While the *sikhara* temples of brick at Baram in Purulia with their soaring heights and characteristic articulations may be compared with the *Jatar deul* of Sundarban and the *Sidhesvar Temple* of Bahulara in Bankura district where turrets attained a monumental elegance, the small stone-temple of laterite enveloped by tenacious vegetation at Nunia in Midnapur district is a beautiful example, a gem of the style of *pidha* or *bhadra deul* of about 12th century A.D. having a pyramidal super-structure upon a square *sanctum* the height being symbolically equivocal with the length of the shrine, the very convention which recalls in miniature the classic *Jagamohon* of the Sun temple at Konarak.

The Bhairava temple at Organda in Jhargram subdivision of Midnapur district, near the Microlithic factory-site as mentioned before is perhaps the first of its kind so far discovered in Bengal (figure 16), its pillared portico before a small square sanctum on a raised plinth evidently supported a flat roof in the golden days of Gupta and Chalukya architecture whose graceful dignity and quiet simplicity have been fascinatingly revealed by the immortal shrines at Sanchi, Tigawa, Aihole and Deogarh. While one may be left wondering whether the temple was erected when Sasanka was a fugitive before the out-numbering forces of Harsha of Kanauj and Bhaskaravarman of Kamarupa, and was retreating into the hearts of Kalinga as revealed by the Ganjam Plates which claim about his suzerainty over oceans, islands, mountains and cities, the archaeological relics in its vicinity amazingly comprise of huge *amalakas*, or fluted finials of stone those which were once perched on lofty *sikharas* of shrines, apart from the ruins of Rajpara abounding with the last vestiges of a Jaina sanctuary where *Tirthankaras* like Parsvanatha and Santinatha were worshipped in Pala times.

The archaeological remains at Jalpaiguri in extreme North of Bengal close to the majestic undulation of the Himalayas bear witness of an age of a religious and artistic activity under the benign yet forceful rule of the Imperial Palas of Bengal and Bihar. Among these monuments and relics of this region, the large domical mound at Joridighi near Jalpaiguri town renders the strange illusion of a *stupa* though formerly by some digging operation blocks of dressed and carved stones, evidently architectural fragments, were recovered from here; and they include one beautiful piece with convex and sloping surface recalling such masonry of the monastic architecture of Ratnagiri in Orissa. While it is possible that the shrine or *stupa* whatever it was, might have belonged to *circa* 9th century A.D., the smaller mound flanking the larger one betrays convincing signs of brick-

masonry datable to the Pala period, the entire evidences bearing witness of an enormous religious establishment in this part of Bengal about a thousand years ago.

The archaeological ruins and monuments in the vicinity of Maynaguri on the other side of the Tista also bear witness of an architectural movement so far north of this country en route to the shadowy hills of Bhutan and the more distant valleys of snow. In the quietitude of an atmosphere unhindered by the Pala-Gujara strifes temples were erected at Batesvar, Sodor-khoi and Purvadaha in different epochs sometimes reminding us of the ambition of the Pala emperors in those days of political rivalry to subdue *Kamarupa* and *Kamboja* referring to the Brahmaputra Valley and the Himalayas respectively as it has been amply revealed by the Monghyr grant of the reign of Devapala and the Bhagalpur grant of Narayanapala. While the former tells that Devapala's cavalry roamed in the Kamboja territory, the latter will refer to the defeat of the king of Pragjyotisha (parts of Bengal, Brahmaputra Valley and Bhutan) before his invading battalions, besides it has been proudly asserted in the *Badal Prasasti* of Gurava Misra that his vast empire extended from Reva's father (Narmada) to the father of Gauri (Himalaya). Thus, from epigraphic sources it becomes clear that the Pala emperors did not ignore the importance of the extreme north of Bengal where the style of their favourite-art spread as far as Purvadaha and Batesvar.

Among the ancient temples near Maynaguri, the most attractive are the ruins of Batesvar which reveals a square *sanctum* with three symbolic projections and stupendous heap of remnants of its *sikhara* carved with *amalakas*, *purnaghatas*, foliated scrolls, *gavaksas* or *chaitya*-windows, *sankha-padma* and Brahmanical deities amongst whom a seated Kubera had been recovered besides the discovery of a *Kirtimukha* flanked by a meandering scroll-work. The decorative stone blocks

bear masons' marks and signs of tenons and one example shows in relief a pair of shrines in both northern and southern styles. It is not impossible that the temple of Batesvar was dedicated to Siva besides its architectural style belongs to the early Pala period, the ground-plan, the motifs of *chaitya*-window and *Purnagata* as also the depth of volume of Kubera being reminiscent of the Late Gupta convention and certain adoptions from the layout of the shrine of Deogarh near Jhansi.

The dilapidated temple of Purvadaha is supporting a far later *sikhara* presumably erected for renovation in mediaeval times under the influence of some local rulers though the off-setted walls are still to be seen as covered with diverse figures of Tantric Mahayanism while the eastern entrance is guarded by divine *dvārapālas*, the decorative and sensitive treatment of forms as also the accentuated elongation enlivened with a sense of plasticity recalling the art of Pala Bengal in about 11th or 12th century A.D. which once inspired the painting style of Nepal

and Tibet. Apart from the singular example of Purvadaha with the sculptured panels depicting Buddhist divinities, the temple of Sodorkhoi a couple of miles away from Maynaguri has a square *sancium* or *garbhagriha* with small niches, an *antaraḥa* or vestibule and a porch or a *mandapa* the entire ground-plan of which probably appertains to circa 11th century A.D. It is very probable that the shrine was originally dedicated to the life-size wonderful image of Chamunda of about the same chronology now worshipped a furlong away by local villagers who call her *Peḥali*.

The Archaeological Directorate is now contemplating to take up field-works not only extensively all over West Bengal but also to begin excavations to find out forgotten sequences of the Past which may sooner or later establish once for all the actual relation between Eastern India and the Western zones of Harappan migrations and cultural diffusions following up earlier settlements of hunting and agricultural communities in the stone-age.

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Figure	Description	Figure	Description
1 ..	Microliths from Organda, district Midnapur. The first left-side one in the uppermost row appears to be a palaeolithic point	10 ..	Terracotta moulded head of a divinity wearing <i>śiṣṭraka</i> . Circa 1st century A.D. Chandraketugarh, district 24-Parganas. $2\frac{1}{4}'' \times 1\frac{1}{2}''$
2 ..	Microliths from Kalla-Lalbazar, district Bankura	11 ..	Terracotta seal with the motif of a <i>torana</i> with voluted architraves and a peacock surrounded by votive symbols. Chandraketugarh, district 24-Parganas. Diam. 2"
3 ..	Microliths from Manohar, P.S. Borjora, district Bankura	12 ..	Terracotta <i>yaksini</i> or Mother Goddess in a squatting pose and bearing the symbolic red slip. Circa 1st-2nd century A.D. Bangarh, district West Dinajpur. Height 6"
4 ..	Polished plano-convex bar-celt. Neolith. Bon. Asuria, district Bankura. Length $9\frac{1}{2}''$	13 ..	Terracotta Kubera rattle. Circa 2nd century A.D. Chandraketugarh, district 24-Parganas. Height 5"
5 ..	Terracotta humped bull with perforated nose and cylindrical bases obviously a toy chariot being comparable with similar Brahmani bulls of Harappan culture. Harinarayanpur, district 24-Parganas. Length 4"	14 ..	Stucco head of a divinity, probably Avalokitesvara. Gupta. Karnasuvarna, district Murshidabad. Height 7"
6 ..	Archaic miniature terracotta vase with perforated ears comparable with similar vases from Jiwanri in Dasht Valley of Baluchistan. Chandraketugarh, district 24-Parganas. Height $2\frac{1}{4}''$	15 ..	Torso of Visnu. Circa 7th century A.D. Jalbandha, district Murshidabad. Height $2\frac{1}{6}''$
7 ..	Terracotta <i>yaksini</i> or <i>apsara</i> wearing an elaborate coiffeur. Circa 1st century B.C. Chandraketugarh, district 24-Parganas. $2\frac{1}{2}'' \times 1\frac{1}{2}''$	16 ..	A side view of the stone temple at Organda, district Midnapur, Late Gupta
8 ..	Terracotta <i>yaksini</i> or <i>apsara</i> wearing an elaborate coiffeur. Circa 1st century B.C. Chandraketugarh, district 24-Parganas. $1\frac{1}{2}'' \times 1\frac{1}{2}''$	17 ..	Four-armed Visnu flanked by Laksmi and Sarasvati. Circa 10th century A.D. Manikganj, district Murshidabad. Height $3\frac{1}{3}''$
9 ..	Terracotta toy-cart envisaging Agni riding his chariot drawn by rams. Circa 1st century A.D. Chandraketugarh, district 24-Parganas. Height 6"	18 ..	Mutilated stone image of Lord Hanuman. Circa 11th century A.D. Jorabali, district West Dinajpur. Height 10"

Figure	Description	Figure	Description
19 ..	Stone image of Agni. <i>Circa</i> 10th century A.D. Balurghat, district West Dinajpur. Height 1'6"		Rajpara, district Midnapur. Height 3'
20 ..	Navagraha. Stone. <i>Circa</i> 11th century A.D. Balurghat, district West Dinajpur. Length 1'1½"	26 ..	Four-armed Visnu flanked by Laksmi and Sarasvati as also the <i>Samkha</i> and the <i>Chakra Purusas</i> . <i>Circa</i> 11th century A.D. West Dinajpur. Height 2'6½"
21 ..	Suryya riding his chariot drawn by seven horses and flanked by gods and goddesses including the divine archers, Usha and Pratyusha. <i>Circa</i> 11th century A.D. Kusumandi, district West Dinajpur. Height 1'10½"	27 ..	Manasa. Stone. <i>Circa</i> 10th century A.D. Balurghat, district West Dinajpur. Height 8½"
22 ..	Marichi, the Buddhist goddess of Dawn, riding in an animated <i>alidha</i> pose her chariot drawn by seven pigs and surrounded by <i>stupikas</i> . <i>Circa</i> 11th century A.D. Balurghat, district West Dinajpur. Height 2'7½"	28 ..	Dancing Ganesa. Stone. <i>Circa</i> 10th century A.D. Mahinagar, district West Dinajpur. Height 1'5"
23 ..	Suryya riding his chariot drawn by seven horses and surrounded by his wives and other divinities. There is an inscription referring to the <i>vijaya rajya</i> , i.e., the victorious reign of Emperor Devapala on the lotus petals of the pedestal. Middle of 9th century A.D. Balurghat, district West Dinajpur. Height 2'7"	29 ..	A divinity. Stone. <i>Circa</i> 10th century A.D. Mahinagar, district West Dinajpur. Height 1'2"
24 ..	The inscribed portion of the Suryya image from Balurghat, district West Dinajpur.	30 ..	Suryya. Stone. Early part of 11th century A.D. Sitalkuchi, district Cooch Behar. Height 1'10¼"
25 ...	Jaina Tirthankara Santinatha standing in <i>Kayotsarga</i> attitude with his usual emblem an antelope. <i>Circa</i> 9th century A.D.	31 ..	Seated Hariti or Vasudhara. The owl of Laksmi may be recognised on the right corner of the <i>triratha</i> pedestal. <i>Circa</i> 11th century A.D. West Dinajpur. Height 1'4"
		32 ..	The ivory box of Maharaja Nanda Kumar said to have been received by him from the Royal house of Murshidabad. 18th century A.D. 9"x8"x3½"
		33 ..	Bronze Durga slaying the Buffalo Demon. <i>Circa</i> 15th century A.D. Bengal. Height 8"

[The photographs taken by Shri Ranjit Kumar Sen of the Directorate of Archaeology. The photograph of the figure No. 16 was taken by Shri Asit Mukherji of the Home (Publicity) Department.]



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

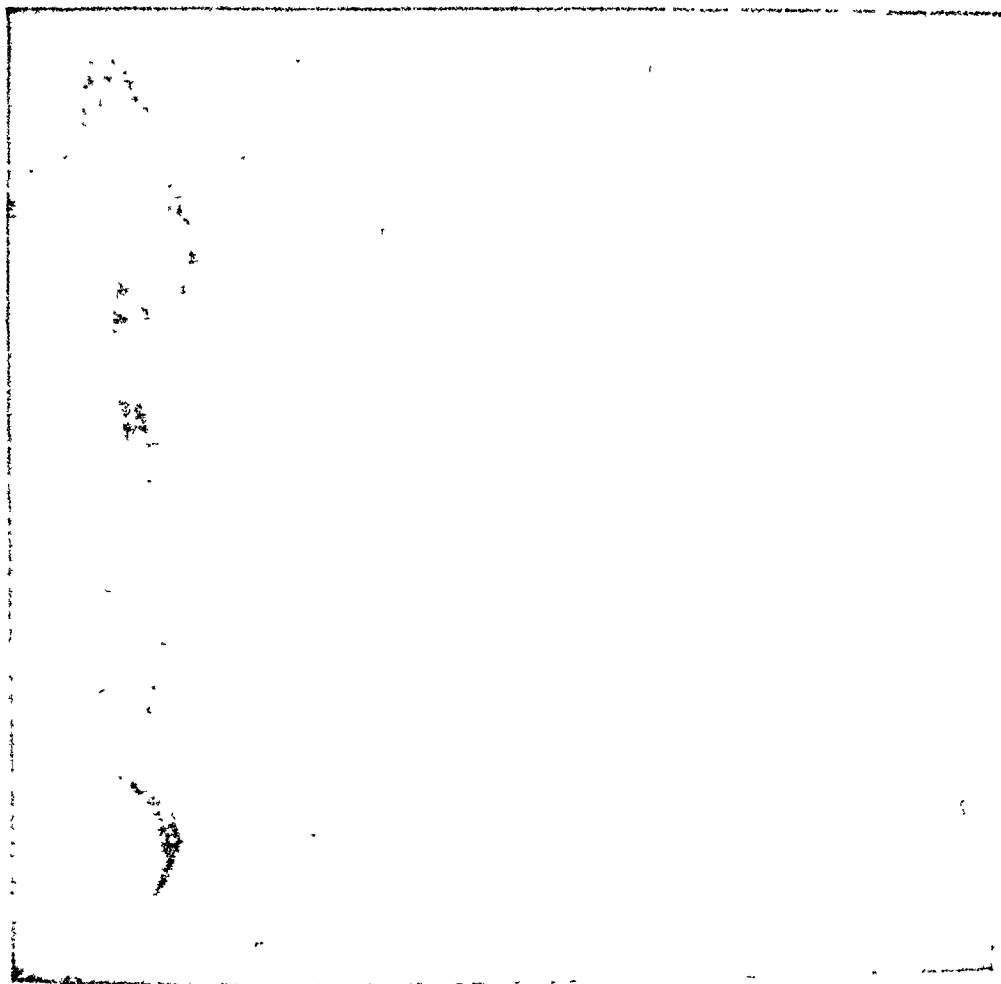


Fig. 3

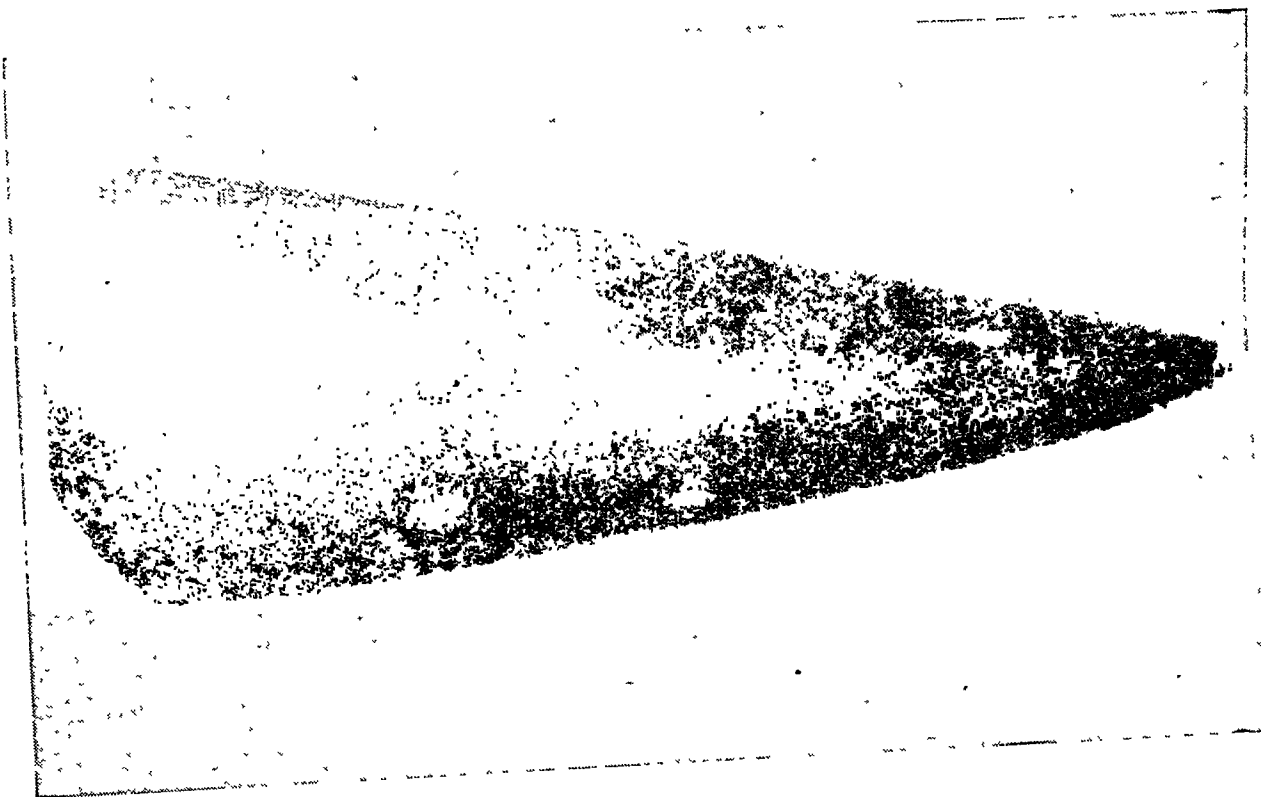


Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

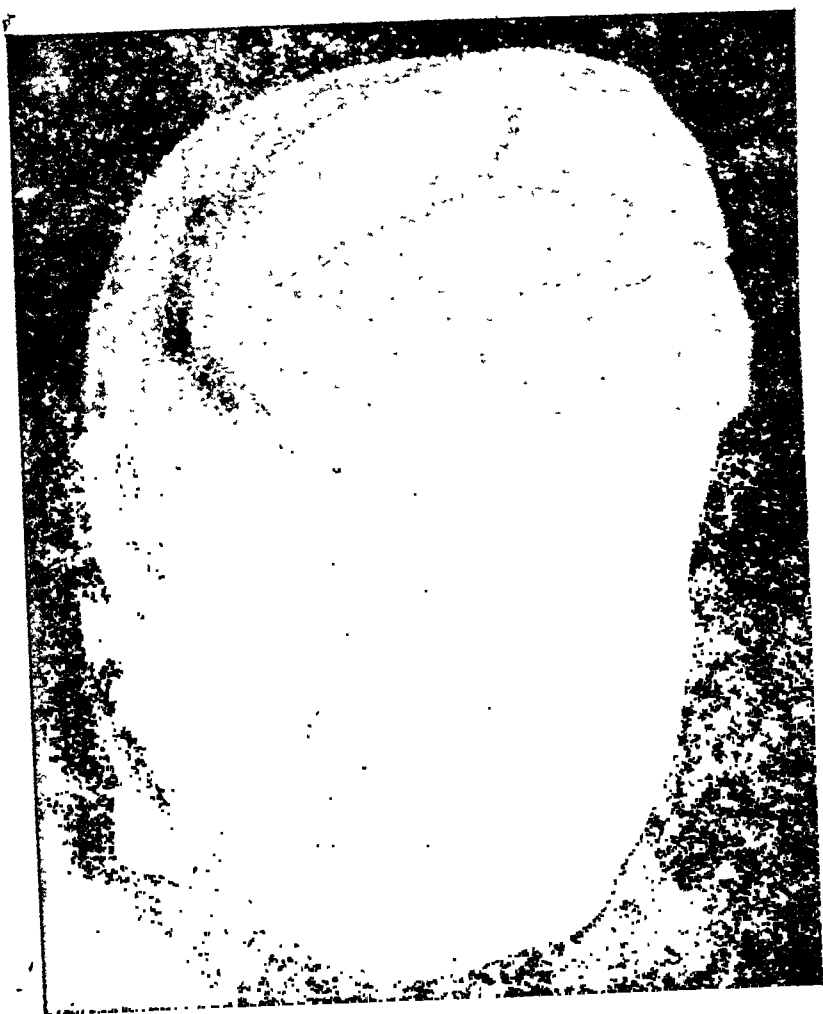


Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 14

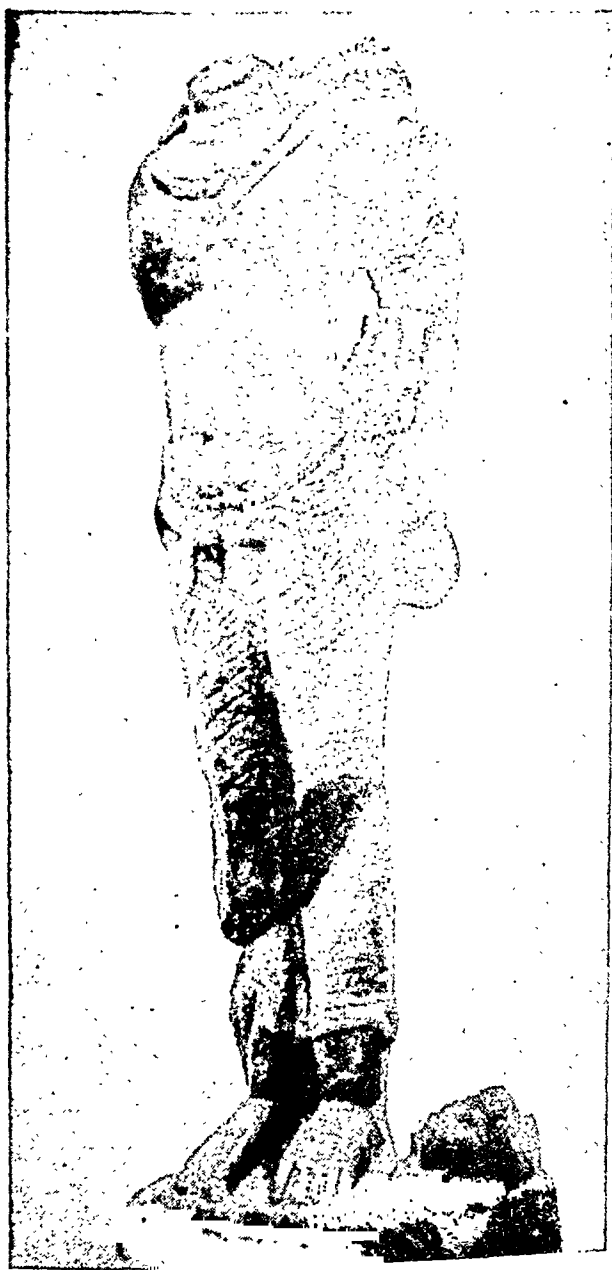


Fig. 15



fig. 16



Fig. 17



Fig. 18



Fig. 19





Fig. 21



Fig. 22



Fig. 23

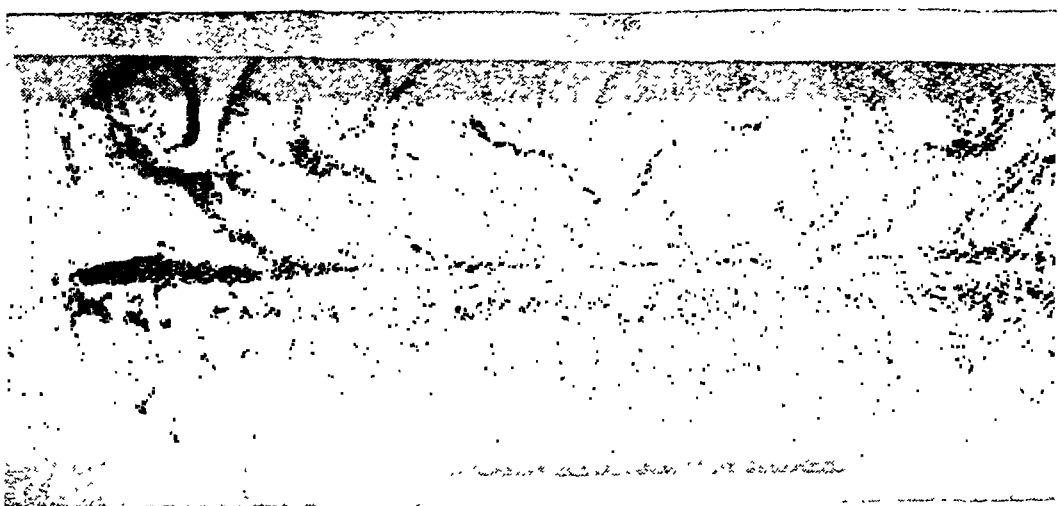


Fig. 24

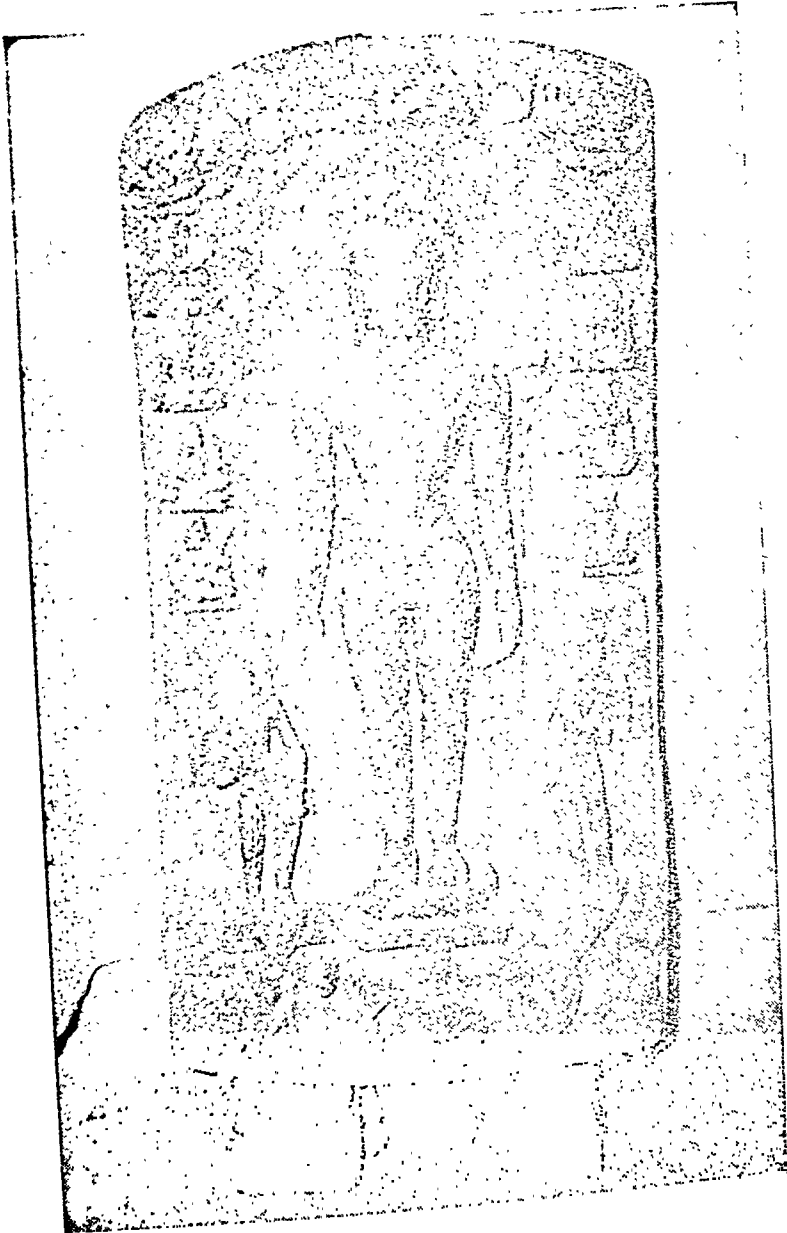


Fig. 25



Fig. 26



Fig. 27



g. 28



29



Fig. 30



Fig. 31

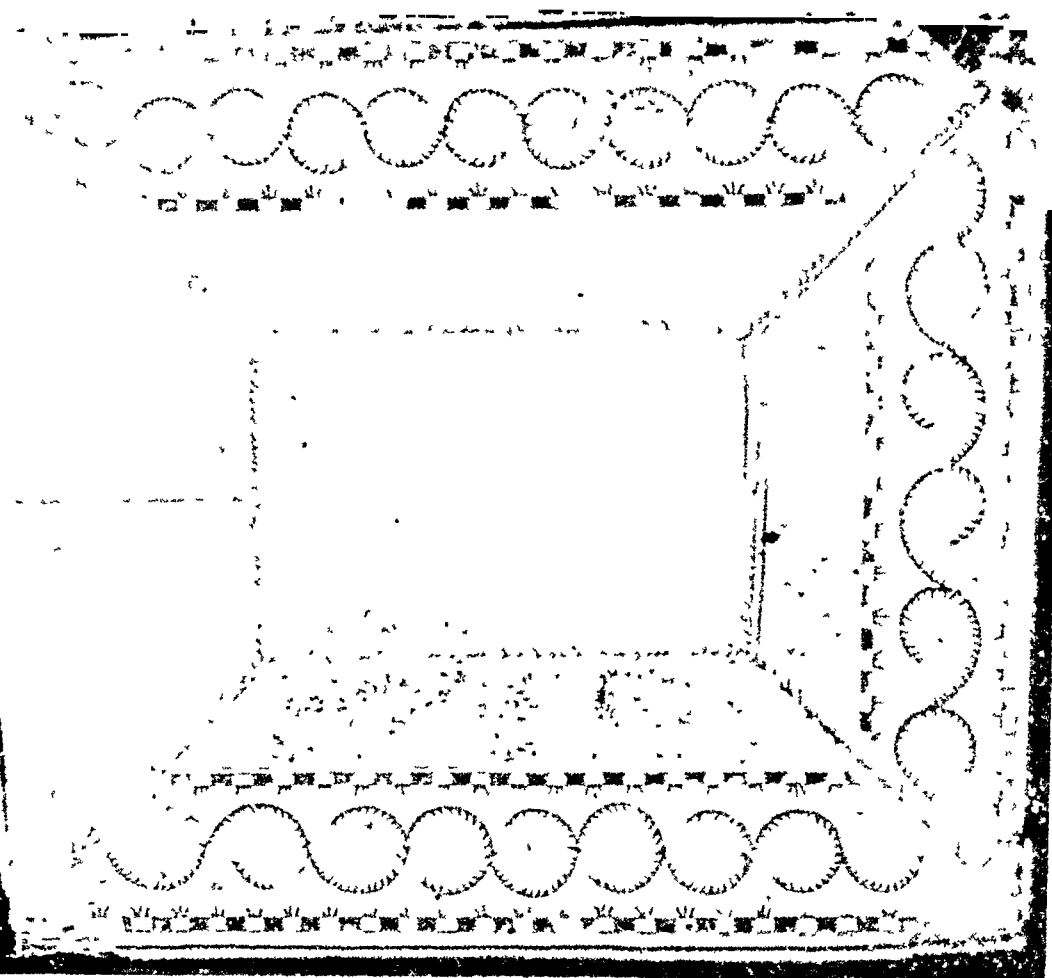


Fig. 32



Fig. 33

